

guised form of *mekch*, the ordinary Hebrew word for "king,"¹ the scribes having apparently given the dreadful word the vowels of *bosheth*, "shameful thing."¹ But it seems clear that in historical times the Jews who offered these sacrifices identified *IVlolech*,² not with the human king, but with Jehovah, though the prophets protested against the custom as an outrage on the divine majesty.²

The If, however, these sacrifices were originally offered to or in behalf

sacrifices to ^of the human king, it is possible that they were intended to *mavhave* *Prolong h*ss *ife and* strengthen his hands for the performance of those magical functions which he was expected to discharge for the good of his people. The old kings of Sweden answered with their *kin^fife* ^{G heads for the ferti%} of the ground,³ and we read that one of them, Vicarious" Aun or On by name, sacrificed nine of his sons to Odin at Upsala sacrifices ^jin order that his own life might be spared. After the sacrifice of or *qu<sm*^s ^{hlus second son he} received from the god an oracle that he should in Sweden, live as long as he gave him one of his sons every tenth year. When Persia, and he had thus sacrificed seven sons, the ruthless father still lived, but *ctr^dagaS~* ^{was so feeble that he could no} longer walk and had to be carried in a chair. Then he offered up his eighth son and lived ten years more, bedridden. After that he sacrificed his ninth son, and lived ten years more, drinking out of a horn like a weaned child. He now wished to sacrifice his last remaining son to Odin, but the Swedes would not let him, so he died and was buried in a mound at Upsala.⁴ In this Swedish tradition the king's children seem to have been looked upon as substitutes offered to the god in place of their father, and apparently this was also the current explanation of the slaughter of the first-born in the later times of Israel.⁵ On that view the sacrifices were vicarious, and therefore purely religious, being intended to propitiate a stern and exacting deity. Similarly we read that when Amestris, wife of Xerxes, was grown old, she sacrificed on her behalf twice seven noble children to the

¹ W. Robertson Smith, *The Religion of Kings*, i. 366
sq.

ligion of the Semites p. 372, note J.
29, in *The*

² "It is plain, from various passages
Chronicle of the Kings
of the prophets, that the sacrifices of
translated by S. Lining
children among the Jews before the
239 *sq.*; H. M.

captivity, which are commonly known
as sacrifices to Moloch, were regarded
The Dying God,

by the worshippers as oblations to
Similarly in Peru, when

Jehovah, under the title of king"
note was sick, he would

(W. Robertson Smith, *Religion of the*
his son to the idol

Semites p. 372, referring to Jeremiah
own life might be

vii. 31, xix. 5, xxxii. 35; Ezekiel spared. See A.

de Herrera, *The*,
xxiii. 39; Micah vi. 7). The same *General History of*

the Vast Continent
view is taken by Prof. G. F. Moore, *and Islands of*

America, translated by
in *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, s.v. "Mo- Capt. J. Stevens

(London, 1725-

lech," vol. iii. 3187 *sq.* 1726), iv. 347 *sq.*

³ *The Magic Art and the Evolution* Micah vi. 6-8.

⁴ "Ynglinga Saga,"

Heimskringla or

of Norway,

(London, 1844), i.

Chadwick, *The Cult*

of Othin (London,

1899), pp. 4, 27;

pp. 160 *sq.*

a person of

sometimes sacrifice

in order that his

view is taken by Prof. G. F. Moore,

and Islands of

America, translated by

in *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, s.v. "Mo-

Capt. J. Stevens

(London, 1725-